(b) whether it is a fact that thousands of cattle in India are being forced to walk days together before slaughter;

(c) whether it is also a fact that the animals taken to abattoirs have their throats hacked at with blunt blades and are skinned for leather bags and shoes even while they are alive; and

(d) if so, the measures Government intend to take to stop cruelty to animals meant for slaughter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (DR. RAMAN): (a) The Times of India on 5th July 2001, had reported People for Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) as stating that M/s Marks and Spencer, a UK-based international retailer, along with some other European retailers had decided to phase out its sourcing of leather products made out of Indian leather. However in a meeting the Chairman, Core Committee On Animal Welfare Programme, Council for Leather Exports (CLE), Chennai had with regional procurement officials of M/s Marks and Spencer on 3rd July, 2001 it was given to understand that they had not announced any boycott on sourcing Indian leather as published in certain sections of the Press. The Representatives of M/s Marks and Spencer assured CLE that they would continue to source leather from India as before, barring the products made of Indian cow hides.

(b) to (d) Incidences of cruelty to animals in transportation, abattoirs, etc., are punishable under existing provisions of Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960 (PCA) and rules made thereunder and action is taken by the concerned agencies whenever such cases come to their notice or are reported. Further, in order to take strict action against people or bodies responsible for cruelty to animals in transportation and in abattoirs, Government have amended the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Transport of Animals on Foot) Rules, 2001; "Transport of Animals (Amendment) Rules, 2001" and "Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Slaughter House) Rules, 2001" under PCA *vide* Notification Nos. 268(E), 269(E) and 270(E) each of these dated 26th March, 2001 respectively. Besides these statutory provisions, Government is also making coordinated efforts with the involvement of State Government for ensuring better enforcement of the existing provisions under PCA.

Boycott of Indian leather products in world market

2456. MS. MABEL REBELLO: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that in April, 2001, Peoples for Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) has warned Indian officials that eventually the world market will boycott buying Indian leather goods; and

(b) if so, whether Government have made any alternative arrangements to sell Indian leather and leather goods?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (DR. RAMAN): (a) People for Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) has been running a campaign against the Indian leather on grounds of alleged cruelty to animals in transportation and in abattoirs and continues to exert pressure on overseas buyers to boycott import of Indian leather products.

(b) The Indian leather industry is a completely decontrolled and deregulated sector and the success of marketing of Indian leather products abroad depends on interplay of various market forces. However in order to address the issue of cruelty to animals, Government, on its part, is making a concerted and coordinated effort, with the involvement of State Governments, for ensuring strict compliance of the provisions under Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960 and rules made thereunder.

Duty free import from Pakistan

2457. SHRI B.J. PANDA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY bepleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government are planning to permit duty free import of about 50 items from Pakistan;

(b) if so, what are the items; and

(c) the number of items which are permitted by Pakistan at present for import from India?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI DIGVUAY SINGH): (a) and (b) The matter of granting tariff concessions to Pakistan on 50 tariff lines is under consideration of the Government.

(c) At present, Pakistan allows free imports of 601 items from India.